

# The Grog Ration

## The Navy Nurse in Film *A Retrospective*

### FEATURING

#### NAVY NURSE IN FILM

-1-

#### CATNIPPED!!

-6-

#### SURGEON'S LOG : SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR

-7-

#### CRANE IN CUBA

-11-

#### SCUTTLEBUTT

-12-

#### NAVY MEDICAL HISTORY QUIZ

-13-

**T**he character of the “Navy nurse” has appeared in many films going back to the silent era.<sup>1</sup> At times the Navy nurse is a nameless figure who garners a few seconds of screen glory, usually walking down a hospital corridor or, worse, standing behind Sidney Greenstreet while holding a thermometer. For this she will be listed in the credits as “Navy nurse,” “nurse,” or, simply, “eclipsed lady.” In some films, the Navy nurse resembles neither a health care provider nor a military officer. In *The Navy versus the Night Monsters*, actress Mamie Van Doren is a “Navy nurse” stationed at an unnamed island in the Pacific during an invasion of nocturnal plant monsters. Through liberties taken with an “artistic license,” Van Doren’s nurse is without rank, protocol, and proper military attire (imagine a Navy uniform regulation written by Russ Meyer). But I guess the real question is: Do the acid-spewing “Night Monsters” really care? Do viewers take note? Although few and far

between, there are films in which the Navy nurse is a central figure complete with name, motivation, personality, and marquee status. In these films—often “inspired” by true events—the Navy nurse actually resembles a military officer. The nurse has rank, follows a chain-of-command, and can be seen rendering medical care. It is worth looking back at the Navy nurse in two of these films—*South Pacific* (1958), and *In Harm’s Way* (1965).

### There’s Nothin’ like a...Navy Nurse

Richard Rodgers’ and Oscar Hammerstein II’s *South Pacific* was originally a Broadway musical starring Mary Martin as Navy nurse “ENS Nellie Forbush” and Ezio Pinza as the mysterious French planter “Emile de Becque.” Based on James Michener’s *Tales of the South Pacific*, it was adapted for the stage in 1949 and made into a film in 1958. Both stage and film versions were directed by Joshua Logan. The film version which starred Mitzi Gaynor

1. Produced in 1926, *Tell it to the Marines* is one of the first films to feature a character of a Navy nurse. This wonderful, but overlooked, silent film is the story of the “tougher than nails” Marine drill sergeant O’Hara (Lon Chaney) and his polar opposite, PVT “Skeets” Burns (William Haines). If Burns’s lackadaisical approach to the military were not bad enough, he also makes advances on Navy nurse Nora Dale (Eleanor Boardman), whom SGT O’Hara secretly loves. Nurse Dale is oblivious to SGT O’Hara’s feelings and is attracted to the handsome “Skeets.” But an indiscretion turns her against him, and it takes an expedition to China and a battle with a warlord’s bandit brigade to sort things out among the nurse and her two Marines.

(sister of actress Janet Gaynor) and Italian actor Rossano Brazzi as the leads, holds the distinction of being the only theatrical adaptation of a Rodgers and Hammerstein musical to have all songs intact.

In *South Pacific*, ENS Forbush is stationed at an advanced Navy base in Espiritu Santo in 1943. Gaynor's Forbush is an exuberant figure with heart and great sensitivity. She finds herself in love with Emile de Becque, who may be a Vichy-fascist. The commanding officer of the base, CAPT George Brackett (Russ Brown), knowing of her relationship with de Becque, asks Forbush to spy on him and find out his secret. In reality, de Becque is a man who came to the island to escape his past deeds in France. Brackett then recruits de Becque to join Marine raider LT Cable (John Kerr) on a dangerous reconnaissance mission to an island that could be Bougainville. When reunited, Forbush and de Becque declare their love for each other.

A few aspects of the film should be noted. Forbush interacts with enlisted SEABEES, most notably Luther Billis (Ray Walston). The real Nellie Forbush would be forbidden to "fraternize" with enlisted sailors like Billis, and vice versa. Female nurses were always segregated from the rest of Navy. Even if a sailor wanted to talk to a nurse in her private quarters he would need to be escorted by her chief nurse. The film credits list a total of 38 Navy nurses in the cast, but not one chief nurse. In addition, no commanding officer or executive officer of the base hospital is

to be seen. Forbush reports directly to CAPT Brackett. With all the singing, dancing, and "washing men out of hair" to do there is very little time for middlemen! As the old Hollywood adage goes, one way of avoiding the red tape is to hire a good screenwriter.

For the "pride of Little Rock, AR," the exotic world of Bali Ha'I and betel nuts must have been overwhelming. Like Forbush, many World War II nurses were products of small towns who joined the Navy not only to serve their country in a time of need but also as a means of seeing the world. World War II nurses were more often than not, independent spirits and adventure-seeking women looking to prove themselves and gain experiences from beyond the borders of their small towns. Like Forbush, some of them would have seen the Navy as a vehicle for romance. However, as a Navy nurse, ENS Forbush would have to abide by the official naval regulations of the day. She would not be allowed to marry Emile de Becque or have his child while on active duty.<sup>2</sup>

By regulation, nurses like Forbush were all unmarried women and graduates of accredited nursing schools with two years work experi-

ence at civilian hospitals. To be accepted into the Nurse Corps they needed to submit a letter of intent and three recommendations to the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery.

In the second half of *South Pacific* ENS Forbush makes her first appearance at the hospital. This hospital would have been either Navy Base Hospital 3 or 6; both were commissioned on Espiritu Santo in 1943. In addition to some battle casualties, her patient load would include many sailors and Marines with dengue, dysentery, or malaria. Following the nurse regulations of the day, ENS Forbush would rest the malarial case during their paroxysms of fever and chills. During the cold stage she would apply blankets, hot water bottles, and offer hot beverages. As the hot stage developed, she would gradually remove the heat, apply tepid sponges, and an ice cap to the patient's head, at the same time



**Navy nurse quarters were indeed "out of bounds" for sailors. Fraternization was frowned upon.**  
*BUMED Library and Archives*

2. In January 1945, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal repealed the marriage ban for women in the Navy. In 1970, the Navy finally ended the pregnancy ban.



**John Wayne aboard the USS Saint Paul during filming of *In Harm's Way*.  
Naval Historical Center**

forcing him to drink cold fluids. Aches and pains were alleviated by placing pillows under the small of the back. Such procedures could be deemed anything but entertainment. In the movie, Forbush's patient load is wholly ambulatory, and it is not clear why they are at the hospital. Aside from the medical care they presumably need, Forbush's patients seem to want nothing more than to hear the nurse sing. After all, there is nothing like a ...Navy nurse.

### **Light'em if You Got'em**

This Otto Preminger-directed film, *In Harm's Way*, gets its title from a quote attributed to John Paul Jones: "I wish no connection with any ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harm's way." *In Harm's Way* is the story of two naval officers—CAPT Rockwell Torrey (John Wayne) and CDR Paul Eddington, Jr. (Kirk Douglas)—who try to recuperate

from, and retaliate for, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Patricia Neal plays the Navy nurse, and Torrey's love interest, "LT Maggie Haynes."

Navy nurse LT Haynes is on temporary assignment in Pearl Harbor. She is a woman who came to nursing and the Navy after her eight-year marriage ended in divorce. If ENS Forbush is the wide-eyed, inexperienced nurse, LT Haynes is her polar opposite—an experienced, world-smart woman who knows human behavior.

When fellow nurse ENS Annalee Dorne asks her where the "nerve" came to call CAPT Torrey, Haynes coolly replies, "Annalee dear, past a certain age, men are apt to avoid making sudden moves where women are concerned. The women have to do the sudden moving, or else everybody stands still until it's too late. It gets late fast in these times. I like this man, and I want him to know it now." And when she hears that ENS Dorne is going to the beach with CDR Eddington she cautions her and states that he is a man with dark secrets. Ultimately, ENS Dorne's meeting with Eddington will end tragically.

CAPT Torrey first encounters LT Haynes at Naval Hospital Pearl Harbor; she supervises the x-ray of his fractured arm and then escorts him to a Navy physician's office. They meet again at a party when she is dressed in civvies. When he states that he did not recognize her,

Haynes replies, "I make a special effort not to look like a nurse." Even so, the viewer can recognize her character as a Navy nurse. We see her wearing ward whites at the naval hospital while checking on patients, giving shots, and applying intravenous drips. She talks about nursing school and her decision to join the Navy. Later in the film, when Torrey is serving as a rear admiral, Haynes asks him, "How do admirals feel about nurses?" Torrey nonchalantly replies, "The same way captains do."

Throughout the film CAPT Torrey and other officers refer to LT Haynes as "Maggie" and "Miss Haynes," but never by rank. Although, considered part of the Navy establishment since 1920, and having what was deemed "relative rank," Navy nurses were not considered official staff corps officers until 1947.<sup>3</sup> It would not have been uncommon for their fellow Navy personnel to refer to them by the title of "Miss" or "Nurse."

Outside the hospital, LT Haynes is never without a cigarette. At a dinner party held at the house of Admiral Nimitz (Henry Fonda), every other Navy officer sitting at the table is smoking a pipe. Behind all this smoke is the unsettling fact that both John Wayne and Franchot Tone (Admiral Husband Kimmel) were fighting lung cancer during the shoot. After filming concluded, Wayne had his left lung removed; Tone died of the disease three years later. And whether or not cigarette smoking was an indirect cause, actress Patricia Neal suffered from multiple strokes the

**3. The Naval Appropriations Act of 4 July 1920 recognized the Navy Nurse Corps as part of the "Navy Establishment." In 1947, with the passage of the Army-Nurse Act (Public Law 36) the Navy Nurse Corps was acknowledged as an official staff.**





**Boxes of *Lucky Strike* cigarettes being brought aboard USS *Missouri*, 1944.**  
*Naval Historical Center*

year *In Harm's Way* was released. It is even more unnerving to learn that she was pregnant at the time.<sup>4</sup>

The cigarette is arguably the most versatile prop ever to be used in film. All genres of film, from the days of D.W. Griffith to the present, from slapstick comedies to gritty war pictures, have leading characters who smoke. *In Harm's Way* is "inspired" by the Navy in World II, and though not politically correct to say, cigarette smoking was once an integral part of Navy culture. Enlisted and officers—nurses included—smoked. In the wartime environment, smoking was believed to calm the nerves and enable the sailor to "focus."<sup>5</sup> As far back as World War I, cigarettes were a part of ration packs. If one doubts the role of tobacco in the war they should look at the photographs of the day. One photograph at the Naval Historical Center, dated 1944, shows an "endless" human chain of sailors carrying boxes of *Lucky Strike*

cigarettes onto the USS *Missouri*'s forward main deck. The caption reads "An average of five cases of cigarettes is [sic] smoked during a tour at sea." A BUMED photograph, circa 1944, shows two Navy nurses with cigarettes visiting a village in the Admiralties.

## Conclusion

Movies are made to entertain, and make money. Some films transcend this mission and become works of art and timeless classics. In all cases, however, movies cannot be relied upon as the fountain of historical truth. *South Pacific* and *In Harm's Way* certainly have their share of anachronistic and sensational scenes but both can be considered successful films. They both entertain while delivering an impression of the historical fact. The characters of ENS Forbush and LT Haynes are substantive film figures; when you finish watching these movies you don't forget they are "Navy nurses." Even so, you cannot separate them from other depictions of Navy nurses. In war pictures, the Navy nurse is almost always used as the

vehicle to the romantic sub-plot. The list of Navy nurse-protagonist love affairs is vast: Forbush and de Becque (*South Pacific*); Haynes and Torrey (*In Harm's Way*); Abbott and Blair (*Hellcats of the Navy*); Willoughby and Momoyama (*Nobody's Perfect*); Rafe/Danny and Johnson (*Pearl Harbor*); Jarian and Solomon (*Purple Hearts*); O'Hara and Dale (*Tell it to the Marines*); and Bingham and Peabody (*Torpedo Alley*). Regardless of this typecast, the Navy nurse has left a legacy; Navy nurses will always be a special part of film history as they are the Navy's. **ABS**



**Two smoking Navy nurses visiting the Admiralties (now the Manus Islands).**  
*BUMED Library and Archives*

4. Despite this complication, Neal gave birth to a healthy daughter.

5. In a report to the Surgeon General of the Navy dated 1879, Medical Director Albert Gihon, USN, wrote that tobacco was a "pernicious, indefensible and wholly unnecessary habit." He went on to state that it "impairs vision, blunts the memory and interferes with mental effort and application, ought, in my opinion as a sanitary officer, at whatever cost of vigilance, to be rigorously interdicted."

# Navy Nurses in Television and Film

*A list of television shows (including episodes) and films containing Nurse Corps characters.*

## **Hawaii Five-O**

### **Episode: *Murder Eyes Only* (1975)**

While Detective Steve McGarrett (Jack Lord) is on active duty with the naval reserve, he is ordered to help investigate the murder of a naval intelligence officer by letter bomb. This episode features a Navy nurse played by Carolyn Gayler.

## **Hellcats of the Navy (1957)**

CDR Casey Abbott (Ronald Reagan), World War II commander of a submarine, is in an “off again-on again” relationship with Navy nurse LT Helen Blair (Nancy Davis). While on a mission, CDR Abbott is forced to leave a frogman behind to save the rest of his crew. But Abbott's second-in-command is convinced that this sacrifice was due to the fact that the dead man had been amorously pursuing LT Blair.

## **Hennessey (1959-1962)**

CBS television series about LT Charles “Chick” Hennessey (Jackie Cooper), a Navy physician stationed at a naval base in San Diego, CA. Actress Abby Dalton played “Martha Hale,” a Navy nurse.

## **In Harm's Way (1965)**

Otto Preminger directed this film about two naval officers—CAPT Rockwell Torrey (John Wayne) and CDR Paul Eddington, Jr. (Kirk Douglas)— who try to recuperate from, and retaliate for, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Patricia Neal plays Navy nurse “LT Maggie Haynes.”

## **JAG**

### **Episode: *Each of Us Angels* (2003)**

A wounded Marine lieutenant named Ron Graham (David James Elliott) and his Navy nurse (Catherine Bell) fall in love on board a hospital ship as World War II rages off the coast of Iwo Jima. Their love affair is shattered when a kamikaze hits the hospital ship, killing the nurse.

## **Mister Roberts (1955)**

In the waning days of World War II, LT Doug Roberts (Henry Fonda) worries that the war is passing him by. He yearns for duty more significant than that of supervising the daily operations of a cargo transport ship in the South Pacific. LT Roberts doesn't realize how much he means to his crew. Cast includes Navy nurse LT Girard (Betsey Palmer).

## **McHale's Navy (1962-1966)**

Television series featured a Navy nurse named “Molly Turner” (Jane Dulo) who was the love interest of LCDR Quinton McHale (Ernest Borgnine).

## **Navy NCIS: Naval Criminal Investigative Service**

### **Episode: *SWAK* (2005)**

A letter “sealed with a kiss” contaminates the NCIS office and personnel with a biological weapon. The character of Navy nurse “LT Emma Ingham” is played by Kelsey Oldershaw.

## **Navy Versus the Night Monsters (1966)**

Navy nurse (Mamie Van Doren) fights acid-spewing plant monsters at duty station in the South Pacific.

## **Nobody's Perfect (1968)**

Film about misadventures of hospital corpsman Doc Willoughby (Doug McClure). Willoughby tries to woo Navy nurse LT Momoyama (Nancy Kwan).

## **Pearl Harbor (2001)**

Michael Bay directed the film about two Navy pilots, and childhood friends, Rafe (Ben Affleck) and Danny (Josh Hartnett) who fall in love with the same woman, a Navy nurse named LT Evelyn Johnson (Kate Beckinsale).

## **Purple Hearts (1984)**

Navy surgeon Don Jardian (Ken Wahl) and nurse Deborah Solomon (Cheryl Ladd) fall in love while serving in the Vietnam War. Their affection for one another provides a striking contrast to the violence of warfare.

## **South Pacific (2001)**

Rodgers' and Hammerstein musical featuring Navy nurse ENS Nellie Forbush (Mitzi Gaynor).

## **Tell it to the Marines (1926)**

Classic Lon Chaney movie has his character SGT O'Hara in love with Navy nurse Nora Dale (Eleanor Boardman).

## **Torpedo Alley (1953)**

LT Bingham (Mark Stevens) renews an acquaintance with two former Navy colleagues and falls in love with the Navy nurse, LT Susan Peabody (Dorothy Malone), who is dating one of them.



# Catnipped!!



## *The True Tale of Thomas Whiskers, USN*

*The following is actual correspondence between the skippers of the hospital ship USS Solace and the destroyer USS Bell in 1919/1920 regarding the disappearance of a ship mascot.*

13 December 1919

From: Commanding Officer, USS *Solace*  
To: Commanding Officer, USS *Bell*  
Subject: Ship's Cat

Several members of the crew of this ship have informed me the commanding officer that the mascot of the *Solace*, Thomas Whiskers, has been kidnapped or catnipped [sic] by certain members of your crew and is being impounded on board your ship. This mascot is a large, black Tom and when last seen was in dress uniform consisting of a leather collar with brass tag marked USS *Solace*.

If this cat is on board your ship, please inform me and I will send a member of the crew for it.

RWP

---

1920

From: Commanding Officer, USS *Bell*  
To: Commanding Officer, USS *Solace*  
Reference: Your letter of Dec. 13, 1919

You ship's cat "Whiskers" is being returned under guard, but an explanation of his presence aboard the ship is no doubt due you.

Prior to our departure from alongside the *Solace*, the cat in question developed a warm regard for the USS *Bell*, consequently spending much of his time aboard. On the morning we shifted berth his presence aboard was unknown to us. Later in the day after your ship had sailed, he was found to have taken possession of an unoccupied stateroom. The master-at-arms immediately made him prisoner on the ground that he was a stowaway and incarcerated him in the paint locker. This will account for the fact that he is no longer the black cat you describe, but battleship gray.

We advise against the removal of this collar since its low visibility aids the performance of his duties.

In regard to the dress uniform worn by the prisoner—in his attempts to remove the paint he pulled off the collar and lost it. This ship feels under no obligation in regard to the latter. In adding one ten cent collar to its stores it lost \$2 worth of paint.

AWD

# *The Surgeon's Log*

—Navy Medicine's Historical Timeline

1898

## *The Spanish-American War*

*Do we judge our past through the present or from the stage in which the historical events occurred? As we look back to all that can be categorized as "history" we see that, with few exceptions, most people were of their time period and most events are recipes made out of the ingredients of the day. The Spanish-American War was such an event. Its great heroes—Dewey, Roosevelt and the Rough Riders—could not have easily fit in any epoch before or after. And, although, there are parallels with other historical conflicts, the Spanish-American War could only be made in the imperialist zeitgeist of the 1890s: a time of "Robber Baron" ruthlessness and the scandal-mongering of yellow journalism.*

*Even so, 1898 was a significant time for the Navy and its Medical Department. During this centennial year of the Navy, the Hospital Corps was established; the hospital ship Solace was commissioned; civilian nurses were contracted to work at Navy hospitals; and the Navy Medical Department oversaw the healthcare of foreign prisoners of war. The following is the official summary of Navy Medicine actions—110 years ago—submitted by Navy Surgeon General William Van Reypen to Secretary of the Navy John D. Long in October 1898. Even though times have changed, this report reminds us that Navy Medicine has always done its job.*

**I**n this report precedence is naturally given to the operations of the Bureau [of Medicine and Surgery] during the war with Spain. From the time of the blowing up of the *Maine* in the harbor of Havana on February 15, 1898, preparations were made by the Bureau providing for any possible contingency. The naval hospitals were equipped for building pavilion wards on the hospital grounds to give accommodation to any number of sick or wounded that the Bureau might be called upon to care for. The director of the naval laboratory prepared to furnish medical and surgical supplies in any quantity, at any place. No additional expense was incurred until war seemed imminent; then the vessels being taken for service, medical and surgical outfits of a kind suitable for the various classes of vessels were bought, assembled, and boxed, ready to be shipped anywhere as soon as called for. There has not been an instance during the war of any vessel having had to wait for her medical stores.

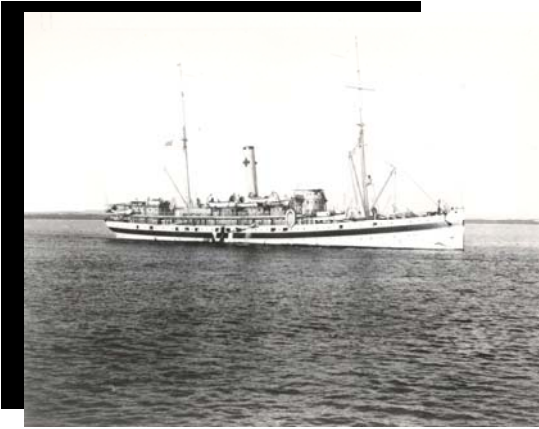
It was known that a corps of volunteer medical officers would be a necessity, and before war was declared or any law passed authorizing their employment medical boards of examination were established in Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Norfolk, and Mare Island (Cal.), to exam-



**William Knickerbocker Van Reypen**  
Surgeon General of the U.S. Navy  
1897-1902

*BUMED Library and Archives*





**USS *Solace* (AH-2)**

ine applicants for appointment, such appointment being contingent upon their services being required. As the result of their examinations a waiting list of well-educated medical men was ready, from which appointments were made. Over 2,000 applications were received, but only a small proportion examined. They have been accommodated themselves to their environments and have justified their appointments.

One of their number, Assist. Surgeon John Blair Gibbs, was killed in action at Guantanamo while serving with the marine battalion. He was the only medical officer killed during the war.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the above appointments, 11 passed assistant and 8 assistant surgeons were mustered into service with the naval reserves from several States.<sup>2</sup>

The question of proper care and transportation of sick or wounded at sea had long been a subject of consideration by the Bureau. The coming of war gave it an opportunity to demonstrate the wisdom of

its propositions and the efficiency of its methods. By direction of the President, and by authority of the Secretary of the Navy, the steamer *Creole*, of the Cromwell Line, between New York and New Orleans, was purchased, and designated as an ambulance ship. The vessel was sent to the yard of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, and there fitted out on the plans of the Bureau. The work was done under the Bureau of Construction and Repair, under the immediate superintendence of Naval Constructor J.J. Woodward, to whom the Bureau is under lasting obligations for his advice, assistance, and his energy in satisfactorily completing the work.<sup>3</sup> The merchant ship *Creole* became the ambulance ship *Solace* in sixteen days, fitted with a large and well-lighted operating room, in which were all the appliances for modern antiseptic surgery, a steam disinfecting apparatus, an ice machine, a steam laundry plant, cold storage rooms, and an elevator for taking patients from the operating room and upper deck to the wards below.

The *Solace* is fitted out under the requirements of the Geneva Convention, and flies the Geneva cross flag.<sup>4</sup> She is the pioneer in her work, and indicates a step in advance that it well became the United States to take. Her fitting out was easy of accomplishment. The chief of every bureau in the

Department having to do the vessel gave his cordial support and assistance to the work. They gave the *Solace* everything she needed. The vessel has been fortunate in her personnel. Commander [Arthur] Dunlap is an ideal commander, and the medical officers of the vessel, Surgeon Streets and Passed Assistant Surgeon [Charles] Stokes, [Reginald] Smith, and [Edward] Bogert, have shown themselves thoroughly competent and efficient in caring for the many sick or wounded who have been under their charge. Three hospital stewards, one of whom was a skilled embalmer, eight trained nurses, a cook, four messmen, and two laundrymen were especially designated for service in the Medical Department.

The *Solace* is built of steel; 3,801 tons; 375 feet long; 44 feet beam; draws 21 feet, and has a continuous speed of 16 knots. She can comfortably accommodate 200 patients, either in berths, swinging cots, or staterooms. The hurricane deck aft is inclosed [sic] with canvas for use as a contagious ward, if required. She carries 37,000 gallons of fresh water in tanks, and 800 tons in her double bottom. Distillers and evaporators keep up the supply.

As soon as the *Solace* received her stores she sailed for the blockading squadron and arrived in time to take on board the wounded at the bombardment of San Juan. She then collected the sick or the wounded from other vessels of the

1. See page 11 for more on Dr. Gibbs.

2. In 1898 the U.S. Navy rolls was bolstered by members of the newly "U.S. Auxiliary Naval Force" (i.e., volunteers and state naval militias). This is not to be confused with the Naval Reserve which was officially established on 3 March 1915.

3. Naval Constructor Joseph Jay Woodward (Abt 1856-1906)

4. The name "Solace" was selected by Margaret Long, daughter of the Secretary of the Navy John D. Long.



squadron and sailed for New York, where, on June 5, 57 patients were landed at the naval hospital.

On June 8 she sailed for Guantanamo, and was present to take on board the wounded marines in their fight with the Spanish troops.

As soon as the Spanish fleet was destroyed in the battle of July 3 she took on board the wounded from the Brooklyn and all the Spanish wounded, and gave them the care and attention that has never before been given to the wounded of friend or foe in any naval combat and that could only be given by an ambulance ship.<sup>5</sup> As it was the policy of the Department to bring all the sick or wounded from Southern waters to Northern naval hospitals as soon as practicable, so that they might have a better chance of recovery, and there was still space left on the *Solace* for wounded men, she went to Siboney and took on board 44 Army wounded and sailed to Hampton Roads on July 12. On July 16 she landed 44 Army wounded at the naval hospital, Norfolk. She then went to New York for coal, stores, and an additional ice plant, and sailed August 2 for Key West, where she took on board the sick from the hospitals and vessels in port, and the visited all the vessels on the blockade around Cuba, taking off their sick or wounded and leaving stores. After receiving at Guantanamo the sick brought by the Gloucester from the vessels around Porto Rico [sic], she sailed for Boston, and on August 29 landed 74 sick from the Navy and 2 sick

soldiers at the Chelsea Naval Hospital. She then coaled and went to New York for repairs and stores, and sailed September 22 for Guantanamo with orders to deliver stores and supplies to all vessels in Cuban or Porto Rican waters, take on board their sick, and then return to New York, bringing, in addition as many sick or wounded of the Army as the vessel could accommodate.

On every trip of the *Solace* she has gone loaded with medical stores and supplies, and also with delicacies and comforts, which have been supplied in abundance for the sick or wounded by generous and patriotic individuals and societies from every part of the United States. Among the contributions to the *Solace* were a carbonator and deck awning from the Rhode Island Sanitary and Relief Association, an X-ray apparatus from the National Society of Colonial Dames, and conveyance boxes for sterilized dressings from the Elizabeth (N.J.) members of the National Society of Colonial Dames.

In this war woman has done her perfect work, and the Medical Department of the Navy is profoundly grateful for the money contributed and supplies furnished for the aid and comfort of the sick or wounded of the Navy. Patriotic women have able supplemented the efforts of the Government, and their assistance has been thoroughly appreciated.

The contributions soon became so numerous that it was necessary

to have a medical officer detailed to receive them. Medical Director [Delavan] Bloodgood was assigned to the duty, and he has received and distributed the stores and attended to the voluminous correspondence with the same business ability he manifested when on the active duty list.<sup>6</sup>

Four young women from the Johns Hopkins Medical School volunteered their services as nurses, and were assigned to duty at the naval hospital, Brooklyn, N.Y. Six women nurses from the registered list of the Daughters of the American Revolution and five Sisters of Charity at Norfolk also volunteered, and were assigned to duty at the naval hospital, Norfolk, Va. All of these women have done their work thoroughly and conscientiously.<sup>7</sup>

The medical officers of the Naval Reserves, who were transferred to the service with the reserves from their States, rendered efficient service and willingly responded to every call made upon them.

The Bureau is under obligations to the Surgeon-General of the Army and to the Supervising Surgeon-General of the Marine-Hospital Service for the caring of the sick or wounded of the Navy in the hospitals under their charge at Key West.

When the Department decided to remove the prisoners from the destroyed Spanish fleet at Santiago to Portsmouth, N.H., immediate preparation was necessary to care for the sick. Two pavilions were

5. It is estimated that between 400 and 500 Spanish sailors were killed and wounded in the engagement off Santiago, Cuba in July 1898.

6. Medical Director Delavan Bloodgood, USN (1831-1902).

7. For more on these nurses, please see article "Women Nurses in the Spanish-American War" by Mercedes Graf, PhD, published in *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women in the Military*, Spring 2001.

built, from plans already prepared, adjoining the naval hospital at Portsmouth. Telegraphic orders were issued for bedsteads, mattresses, bedding, stores, and supplies. Additional medical officers and nurses were sent, and when the vessels arrived with the prisoners the well men found comfortable barracks and the sick comfortable hospitals, to which they immediately transferred. They were lodged, fed, and clothed as though they were expected guests. The Navy has reason to feel proud of this five days' work. One hundred equipped cots and six trained nurses were generously supplied by the Red Cross Society after the hospital was established.

On June 17 the President approved an act of Congress organizing a hospital corps of the Navy. The passage of this act is the culmination of the efforts of the Bureau for many years. It will give the service of the efforts of the Bureau for many years. It will give the service a trained corps of men who will now have some reason for remaining in service, having a hope of promotion and advancement as the result of faithful service, sobriety, and attention to duty. Its good results are already manifest; changes are now being made as rapidly as practicable, and nearly all of the hospitals are now supplied with trained nurses, and in many of them are apprentices undergoing instruction. The examination for admission is rigid, and there will be more admissions to the corps when the end of the war releases from service many of the

trained nurses now employed in other departments.

I can not close this portion of the Bureau's report without bearing testimony to the efficiency, skill, and devotion to duty of the personnel of the Medical Department. Not a word but of praise has the Bureau heard of any of them—regulars or volunteers. When war was imminent they vied one with another in their efforts to get on fighting ships. Some have had greater opportunities than others, but all have done well the work assigned them. Surgeon [John] Edgar saw his associate, Assistant-Surgeon Gibbs, shot by his side in the Spanish attack, and he continued his work alone, doing it thoroughly and well, as it was known he would.

The medical officers of the vessels in the fight at Manila and in the battle of the 3d of July shared the dangers of their comrades, and should participate in the praise accorded to them.

The medical officers of the *Solace* have the honor of inaugurating the first complete system of antiseptic surgery at sea. They have adapted means to ends, have improvised apparatus, having been fertile in expedients, and have the satisfaction of having demonstrated that with skill and intelligence the percentage of mortality among the patients on a well-equipped ambulance ship will be no greater than in the hospitals on shore.

Medical Inspector [Rufus] Persons found himself suddenly con-



**Spanish POWs at Naval Hospital Portsmouth, NH in 1898.**

fronted with 226 Spanish sick or wounded prisoners in a hastily established hospital. He was equal to the emergency, and he and his associates were complimented by Admiral Cervera when he visited the camp.<sup>8</sup>

The medical officers of the other hospitals have had a sudden large accessions of patients. They were always ready and always care for them as well.

The directory of the laboratory (our receiving and distribution depot of supplies) applied his well known energy to the work, and never failed to have supplies ready whenever and wherever required. Those whose services have not been so conspicuous have done their duty in the stations assigned them, and have contributed their share toward the efficiency of the Medical Department of the Navy.

**Van Reypen, WK. "Report of the Surgeon-General, U.S. Navy" *Report of the Surgeon-General, U.S. Navy, Chief of the Bureau of Medicine and Surgery to the Secretary of the Navy*. Washington, DC: GPO. 1898. Pages 3-7.**

**8. Admiral Pasqual Cervera y Topete (1839-1909), Commander of the Spanish Fleet in 1898. Following the destruction of his fleet at the Battle of Santiago (3 July 1898), Admiral Cervera was captured and kept prisoner at Camp Long (later the Portsmouth Naval Prison) on Seavey's Island, Kittery, ME.**

## Stephen Crane in Cuba

*To cover the demand for front-line journalism, American newspapers sent some of the best writers—including Richard Harding Davis (1864-1916) and Stephen Crane (1871-1900)—to cover the war with Spain. In the summer of 1898, Crane was covering a Marine battalion entrenched at Fort McCalla, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. Early in the morning of 12 June, Crane witnessed the death of Marine medical officer, John Gibbs, USN, which he reported as only he could.*

I went in search of Gibbs, but I soon gave over an active search for more congenial occupation of lying flat and feeling the hot hiss of the bullets trying to cut my hair. For the moment I was no longer a cynic.



**In his short life, Crane made extensive travels out west and to Greece. Here we see the writer in 1897 while he was covering the Greco-Turkish War.**

*Stephen Crane Photographs  
Special Collections Research Center  
Syracuse University Library*

I was a child who, in a fit of ignorance, had jumped into the vat of war. I heard somebody dying near me. He was dying hard. Hard. It took him a long time to die. He breathed as all noble machinery breathes when it is making its gallant strife against breaking, breaking. But he was going to break. It seemed to me, this breathing, the noise of a heroic pump which strives to subdue a mud which comes upon it in tons. The darkness was impenetrable. The man was lying in some depression within seven feet of me. Every wave, vibration, of his anguish beat upon my senses. He was long past groaning. There was only the bitter strife for air which I held my own breath in the common unconscious aspiration to help. I thought this man would never die. I wanted him to die. Ultimately he died. At the moment the adjutant came bustling along erect amid the spitting bullets. I knew his voice. 'Where's the doctor? There's some wounded men over there. Where's the doctor?' A man answered briskly: 'Just died this minute, sir.' It was as if he had said: 'Just gone around the corner this minute, sir.' Despite the horror of this night's business, the man's mind was somehow influenced by the coincidence of the adjutant's calling aloud for the doctor within a few seconds of the doctor's death. It—what shall I say? It interested him, this coincidence. ☞

**Crane, Stephen. *Wounds in the Rain: War Stories*. London: Methuen & Co. 1900. Pages 237-239.**




# Scuttlebutt


## **“STEPPING STONES TO TOKYO” FILM PREMIERE**

**T**he premiere showing of the BUMED film “Stepping Stones to Tokyo” is scheduled for 20 March 2008 at 1900 in the Memorial Auditorium (Bldg 2, 3rd Deck) at the National Naval Medical Center (NNMC), Bethesda, MD.


This 30-minute video production—the fifth installment in the six-part *Navy Medicine at War* series—traces the Navy medical experience with the Marine Corps’ island-hopping campaign during the first three years of the war. Film focuses on the special relationship between hospital corpsmen and the Marines that they supported. This unique production will, also, highlight the battle for Iwo Jima—the most ferocious battle in Marine Corps history.

If you would like to attend this event or obtain DVDs of any production in the series please contact us at telephone: (202) 762-3244 or e-mail: [andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil](mailto:andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil). 


## **NURSE CORPS MISCELLANY, 1908-2008 IS AVAILABLE**

**W**hat are some of the achievements of Navy Nurse Corps personnel? What legislation impacted and molded the Nurse Corps? Who are some of the notable nurses to serve in the U.S. Navy? If you do not have answers to these questions and would like to know perhaps you would like to see the new publication, *U.S. Navy Nurse Corps Miscellany, 1908-2008*. This handy reference guide will take you through 100 years of the Nurse Corps’ exquisite heritage—the notable achievements, significant firsts, tragic losses of life that affected the Nurse Corps; a record of uniforms from its inception; and a section containing the names of film and television programs featuring Navy nurses. To obtain a digital copy of publication e-mail us at: [andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil](mailto:andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil). 


## **SECOND ANNUAL SHNM PAPER SESSION SCHEDULED FOR 10 APRIL 2008**

**D**on’t forget that the second annual Society for the History of Navy Medicine paper session and meeting is scheduled for 1500 on 10 April 2008 at the American Association for the History of Medicine conference in Rochester, NY. Papers this year include: “Caring for the Sick & Wounded: The First Female Nurses in a U.S. Hospital” by Paul Berman, MD; “Nurses at War” by CDR Patricia Rushton, NC, USNR (Ret.); and “Navy Medicine and FDR: An Uneasy Therapeutic Relationship” by CAPT Lee Mandel, MC, USN. To register for this paper session please e-mail CAPT Thomas Snyder, MC, USNR (Ret.) at [thomaslsnyder@gmail.com](mailto:thomaslsnyder@gmail.com). To register for the conference please go to: [www.histmed.org](http://www.histmed.org). 

## **HISTORICAL LECTURE SCHEDULED FOR 29 APRIL 2008**

**T**he Surgeon General’s Speaker series is scheduled to continue on 29 April 2008 with the lecture “Care Amidst the Shortage: The Relationship between the American Red Cross and the Navy Nurse Corps during World War I” by Jennifer Telford, PhD. This lecture will take place in the Memorial Auditorium, NNMC Bethesda, MD, at 1000. All interested parties are invited to attend. 

## **NAVY MEDICAL AND OSTEOPATHIC SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM (1972-1976)**

**W**e are collecting information on the above named scholarship program to answer a historical query. If you have any information or leads about this short-lived program please contact us at telephone: (202) 762-3244 or e-mail: [andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil](mailto:andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil). 

# Navy Medical History Quiz

- 1.) Lon Chaney's connection to the U.S. military was not limited to his portrayal of SGT O'Hara in *Tell it to the Marines* (one of the first films to have a Navy nurse character). Towards the end of his life, Chaney, a lifelong chain smoker, was treated for lung cancer at Naval Hospital Camp Pendleton. And, partly, because of his dynamic portrayal of a Marine, Chaney was the first film star to be made an honorary member of the U.S. Marine Corps. Name two other film stars that were honorary Marines.
- 2.) Like Navy nurses, Navy dentists, hospital corpsmen, and physicians have appeared as characters in movies and television programs. Name three films and/or television shows containing a portrayal of a 1.) Navy dentist 2.) Navy hospital corpsman 3.) Navy physician (one movie/television program for each staff corps).
- 3.) In his 1898 report to the Navy Surgeon General, Surgeon F.W.F. Wieber, of USS *Miantonomoh*, wrote that "The Bishop system was installed for both officers and men. It proved very unsatisfactory." What newly installed shipboard device (i.e., the "Bishop system") was Dr. Wieber describing?
- 4.) In the Spanish-American War, USS *Solace*'s hospital unit consisted of four physicians, two pharmacists (hospital corpsmen), and eight male contract nurses. Although not officially part of the Navy, these nurses were given what rating during their service?

**Think you know the answers to the quiz?**

**Please submit your answers to [andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil](mailto:andre.sobocinski@med.navy.mil) no later than 26 March 2008. The first person to submit correct answers to all the above questions will receive a special prize. Answers to the quiz will be published in our next issue.**

# Navy Medical History Quiz

## Answers (Jan-Feb 2008)

- 1.) Fifty-nine years before nurses reported aboard the USS *Red Rover*, two women—Mary Allen and Mary Marshall—served as nurses aboard this Navy ship? (Hint. This ship boasted a figurehead carved by the famed American sculptor William Rush.)

**Answer: USS *United States*. This frigate was originally commissioned in Philadelphia, PA, on 11 July 1797.**

- 2.) According to the ship's log dated 10 May 1813, these nurses were listed as \_\_\_\_\_. (Hint. Latin word for a soldier added to a legion after it is complete. Term used in Army and Navy for someone who, although not part of the regular staff, can be called on to serve when necessary.)

**Answer: Supernumeraries**

- 3.) In the Civil War over 600 sisters served as nurses at Army, Navy, and civilian hospitals. In addition to these holy women, a number of famous American authors (either published or to be published) served as volunteer nurses during the war. Among these was the poet Walt Whitman. Name one other author-Civil War nurse.

**Answers include: Louisa May Alcott, Hannah Ropes, and Augusta Evans Wilson.**

- 4.) On 4 June 1943, the USS *William Longshaw* (DD-559) was commissioned. Named in honor of the heroic Navy doctor who lost his life in the siege of Fort Fisher, NC, it is one of \_\_\_\_\_ ships to be named after naval physicians.

**Answer: Twenty**

- 5.) The Navy Medical Department has had a long history providing assistance to victims of earthquakes. Even before the natural disasters that struck Messina, Italy in 1908, Navy rendered medical aid to victims of the earthquakes that rocked Arica, Peru in 1868, Charleston, SC in 1886, and San Francisco, CA in 1906. In 1923, the Navy Medical Department was itself a victim when a natural disaster destroyed one of its hospitals. Name this medical facility.

**Answer: Naval Hospital Yokohama. Originally constructed in 1872, this facility was destroyed by a 1923 earthquake.**



*The Grog Ration* is a bi-monthly publication dedicated to the promotion and preservation of the history of the Navy Medical Department and the field of maritime medicine. Articles and information published in *The Grog Ration* are historical and are not meant to reflect upon the present-day policy of the Navy Medical Department, U.S. Navy, and/or the Department of Defense.

The staff of *The Grog Ration* are always looking for original articles (of less than 2,000 words), historical artwork and photographs, and trivia to publish. For more information on the types of material we are looking for please contact us at:

**E-Mail:** Andre.Sobocinski@med.navy.mil

**Tele:** (202) 762-3244

**Fax:** (202) 762-3380

**Address:**

**Bureau of Medicine and Surgery**

**2300 E Street, NW**

**Washington, DC 20372-5300**

**ATTN: Office of the Historian**

If you have articles and information about the acts and accomplishments of Navy medical personnel of the present-day please send them to the ***Navy Medicine*** magazine at:

**E-Mail 1:** Janice.Hores@med.navy.mil

**E-Mail 2:** 19native47@verizon.net

**Address:**

**Bureau of Medicine and Surgery**

**2300 E Street, NW**

**Washington, DC 20372-5300**

**ATTN: Office of the Historian**